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PATENT

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Appellant	:	Jacobi et al.
Appl. No.	:	09/933,277
Filed	:	August 20, 2001
For	:	SERVICES FOR INCREASING THE UTILITY OF ELECTRONIC WISH LISTS
Examiner	:	Ronald Laneau
Group Art Unit	:	3627

APPEAL BRIEF

United States Patent and Trademark Office
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, VA 22313-1450

Appellants, Applicants in the above-captioned patent application, appeal the rejection of Claims 1-35 set forth in the Office Action mailed on May 17, 2005 (hereinafter "the current Office Action"). A check for the filing fee is enclosed. Please charge any additional fees that may be required now or in the future to Deposit Account No. 11-1410.

I. REAL PARTY IN INTEREST

The real party in interest in the present application is Amazon.com, Inc.

II. RELATED APPEALS AND INTERFERENCES

No related appeals, interferences or judicial proceedings are currently pending.

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III. STATUS OF CLAIMS

Claims 1-35, which are attached hereto as an appendix, are currently pending in the application and are the subject of this appeal.

IV. STATUS OF AMENDMENTS

On September 13, 2005, after filing their Notice of Appeal but before filing this Appeal Brief, Appellants filed an Amendment to make the following minor changes to the claims:

- Claim 1 was amended to correct the following typographical error: at the end of the claim, the phrase “wish lists other users” was changed to “wish lists of other users”.
- Dependent Claim 25 was amended by adding “said message provided as a result of said updating of the data repository” at the end of the claim.

No other amendments have been made to the pending claims since the present application was filed.

V. SUMMARY OF CLAIMED SUBJECT MATTER

The present application includes four independent claims. Each independent claim is paraphrased below, with citations to corresponding portions of the specification and drawings as required by 37 C.F.R. § 41.37(c)(1)(v). These citations are provided in order to illustrate specific examples and embodiments of the recited claim language, and not to limit the claims.

Claim 1 is directed to an electronic catalog system. The system comprises:

- an electronic catalog of items that are available for purchase, the electronic catalog including pages that include descriptions of the items, and providing functionality for online users to select items to purchase (see, e.g., example catalog page shown in Fig. 1, and corresponding description at page 7, lines 5-21; and page 6, lines 1-8);
- a wish list application (318 in Fig. 3) that provides functionality for users of the electronic catalog to create wish lists with items selected from the electronic catalog, and to purchase items as gifts from the wish lists of other users (see, e.g., page 2, lines 13-15; and page 15, lines 3-8);

- a database (324 in Fig. 3) which stores information about affiliations between the users (see, e.g., page 10, lines 13-18; and page 14, lines 23-27); and
- a notification component (320 in Fig. 3) which is responsive, to an online request from a first user for a catalog page which includes a description of a first item, by at least (a) determining whether the first item is on an electronic wish list of a user who is affiliated with the first user (see, e.g., block 412 of Fig. 4), and (b) when the first item is determined to be on an electronic wish list of a second user who is affiliated with the first user, supplementing the page with a notification that the first item is on the wish list of the second user (see, e.g., page 2, lines 6-26; Fig. 1, notification message 102; Fig. 4, block 414; and page 16, lines 5-30);
- whereby users are notified, during browsing of the electronic catalog, when accessed items are on the electronic wish lists of other users.

Independent Claim 12 is directed to a method of assisting users in selecting items to purchase from an electronic catalog of items. The method comprises:

- maintaining electronic wish lists for each of a plurality of users (see, e.g., 324 in Fig. 3, page 14, lines 23-27; and page 15, lines 3-8);
- for at least a first user, maintaining data indicating a set of other users that are affiliated with the first user ("affiliated users") (see, e.g., page 2, lines 9-13; page 9, line 22 to page 11, line 28; page 14, lines 23-27; 202 in Fig. 2A; blocks 210 and 212 in Fig. 2B; and 324 in Fig. 3);
- monitoring browsing of the electronic catalog by the first user to determine whether items accessed by the first user are on electronic wish lists of the affiliated users (see, e.g., page 8, line 30 to page 9, line 3; Fig. 4, blocks 408 and 412; and page 16, lines 5-30); and
- notifying the first user during said browsing of the electronic catalog when an accessed item is determined to be on an electronic wish list of an affiliated user (see, e.g., page 2, lines 6-26; notification message 102 in Fig. 1; Fig. 4, blocks 414 and 418; and page 16, lines 27-30).

Independent Claim 24 is directed to a method of assisting users in selecting items to purchase from an electronic catalog of items. The method comprises:

- maintaining an electronic wish list of a first user, the electronic wish list including items selected from the electronic catalog by the first user and being accessible to other users (see, e.g., 324 in Fig. 3, page 14, lines 23-27; and page 15, lines 3-8);
- in response to a second user purchasing an item from the electronic wish list of the first user, updating a data repository (324 in Fig. 3) to indicate that the first user is affiliated with the second user (see, e.g., page 2, lines 27-29; Fig. 2B, block 210; and page 11, line 8 to page 12, line 26); and
- subsequently to updating the data repository, monitoring browsing of the electronic catalog by the second user and, during said browsing of the electronic catalog, notifying the second user when an item accessed by the second user is on the electronic wish list of the first user (see, e.g., page 2, lines 16-20; notification 102 in Fig. 1; page 7, lines 5-28; Fig. 4; and page 16, lines 5-30).

Independent Claim 33 is directed to a method of assisting users in selecting items to purchase from an electronic catalog of items. The method comprises:

- maintaining electronic wish lists for each of a plurality of users (see, e.g., 324 in Fig. 3, page 14, lines 23-27; and page 15, lines 3-8);
- for at least a first user, maintaining affiliation data indicating a set of other users that are affiliated with the first user (“affiliated users”) (see, e.g., page 2, lines 9-13; page 9, line 22 to page 11, line 28; 202 in Fig. 2A; blocks 210 and 212 in Fig. 2B; and 324 in Fig. 3);
- maintaining similarity data which indicates similarities between items in the catalog (see, e.g., page 3, lines 7-12; page 17, line 15 to page 18, line 12; and “related items table” 340 in Fig. 3); and
- when the first user accesses a first item in the electronic catalog, determining whether, and notifying the first user if, the first item is similar to an item on an electronic wish list of an affiliated user, as reflected by the similarity data (see, e.g., page 3, lines 7-12; and page 18, lines 13-21).

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VI. GROUNDS OF REJECTION TO BE REVIEWED ON APPEAL

The following ground for rejection is to be reviewed on appeal: the rejection of Claims 1-35 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Knorr et al. (US 2002/0077929 A1) in view of Wolfe (US 2003/0023687 A1) and further in view of Westrope et al. (U.S. Pat. 5,721,832).

VII. ARGUMENT

For the reasons set forth below, Appellants respectfully submit that the rejection of Claims 1-35 over Knorr et al., Wolfe, and Westrope et al. (collectively “the applied references”) is improper. Appellants will treat Knorr et al. and Wolfe as prior art for purposes of this appeal, but reserve the right to disqualify one or both of these references as prior art in the future.

Independent Claim 1

The rejection of independent Claim 1 is improper because, among other reasons, the applied references do not disclose or suggest “a notification component which is responsive, to an online request from a first user for a catalog page which includes a description of a first item, by at least (a) determining whether the first item is on an electronic wish list of a user who is affiliated with the first user, and (b) when the first item is determined to be on an electronic wish list of a second user who is affiliated with the first user, supplementing the page with a notification that the first item is on the wish list of the second user; whereby users are notified, during browsing of the electronic catalog, when accessed items are on the electronic wish lists of other users,” in the context of the other limitations of Claim 1.

The Examiner takes the position that Wolfe discloses the foregoing limitations at paragraph 53. Current Office Action at page 3, paragraph 1. Appellants respectfully disagree. Paragraph 53 of Wolfe describes a system in which a user wishing to create a wish list can install a “Stasher” button on his or her web browser, and then use this button to add products to the wish list from the web pages of a merchant’s web site. Once the wish list is complete, the user can notify family members of the wish list, who can then log-in to an associated web site, Swagbag.com, to access the wish list. No other method is disclosed in Wolfe for informing the family members of what items are on this wish list, let alone the method defined in Claim 1.

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The rejection of independent Claim 1 is also improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest “a database which stores information about affiliations between the users.” The Examiner takes the position that the database 210 shown in Figure 4 of Knorr et al. meets this limitation. Nothing in Knorr et al., however, suggests that this database 210 stores information about affiliations between users. In this regard, the only disclosure in Knorr et al. regarding the contents of the database 210 is the following statement in paragraph 52: “Databases 210 can be used to both store the inventory and financial data of a common electronic vendor, as well as to record the transaction identifiers, in some embodiments.”

Finally, Appellants submit that the rejection of Claim 1 is improper because the Examiner has not identified a suggestion or motivation in the prior art to combine Knorr et al. and Wolfe. In connection with this issue, the Examiner asserts that it would have been obvious to combine Knorr et al. and Wolfe because the combination “would provide a system that allows buyers to easily shop for others by searching for a user’s wish list and personal preferences at the system Web and also allow the user to select one or more buyers from an address book and notify the selected buyers of a specific wish list via URL links.” Current Office Action at page 3, last paragraph, to page 4, line 4. Appellants respectfully disagree. Even if the combination of Knorr et al. and Wolfe would provide such a system, it does not follow that one skilled in the art would have been motivated to make such a combination. In this regard, the Examiner has not identified any disclosure in the references themselves, or in any other source of prior art, that suggests such a combination.

In summary, because the applied references do not disclose or suggest all of the limitations of Claim 1, and because the Examiner has not identified a suggestion or motivation to combine Knorr et al. and Wolfe, the obviousness rejection of Claim 1 is improper and should be withdrawn.

Dependent Claim 2

Claim 2 depends from Claim 1, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 1. In addition, the rejection of Claim 2 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 2, namely “a cache memory which stores wish lists of users affiliated with the first user while the first user browses the electronic catalog, wherein the notification component accesses the cache memory to

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determine whether items viewed by the first user are on the wish lists of users affiliated with the first user.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

Dependent Claim 3

Claim 3 depends from Claim 1, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 1. In addition, the rejection of Claim 3 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 3, namely “a component that updates the database to indicate an affiliation between two users as a result of one user purchasing a gift for the other user.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

Dependent Claim 4

Claim 4 depends from Claim 1, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 1. In addition, the rejection of Claim 4 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 4, namely “a component that updates the database to indicate an affiliation between two users as a result of one user sending an electronic card to the other user.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

Dependent Claim 5

Claim 5 depends from Claim 1, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 1. In addition, the rejection of Claim 5 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 5, namely “a form page from which users may explicitly create affiliations with other users.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

Dependent Claim 6

Claim 6 depends from Claim 1, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 1. In addition, the rejection of Claim 6 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 6, namely “wherein the notification component is further responsive to the online request by notifying the first user if the first item is similar to an item on a wish list of an affiliated user.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

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Dependent Claim 7

Claim 7 depends from Claim 1, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 1. In addition, the rejection of Claim 7 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 7, namely “wherein the notification component provides, within the notification, a selectable link to the wish list of the second user.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

Dependent Claim 8

Claim 8 depends from Claim 1, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 1. In addition, the rejection of Claim 8 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 8, namely “wherein the notification component indicates, within the notification, at least one of (a) a date the first item was added to the wish list, and (b) a date the wish list was last updated.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

Dependent Claim 9

Claim 9 depends from Claim 1, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 1. In addition, the rejection of Claim 9 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 9, namely “wherein the notification component provides, within the notification, information about an upcoming gift-giving event associated with the second user.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

Dependent Claim 10

Claim 10 depends from Claim 1, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 1. In addition, the rejection of Claim 10 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 10, namely “wherein the catalog page is a product detail page.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

Dependent Claim 11

Claim 11 stands or falls with Claim 1.

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Independent Claim 12

The rejection of independent Claim 12 is improper because, among other reasons, the applied references do not disclose or suggest “monitoring browsing of the electronic catalog by the first user to determine whether items accessed by the first user are on electronic wish lists of the affiliated users; and notifying the first user during said browsing of the electronic catalog when an accessed item is determined to be on an electronic wish list of an affiliated user,” in the context of the other claim limitations. The wish list generation and access process described at paragraph 53 of Wolfe does not satisfy these limitations.

The rejection of independent Claim 12 is also improper because, as discussed above, the Examiner has not identified a suggestion or motivation to combine Knorr et al. and Wolfe.

Dependent Claim 13

Claim 13 depends from Claim 12, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 12. In addition, the rejection of Claim 13 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 13, namely “wherein monitoring browsing of the electronic catalog by the first user comprises maintaining wish lists of at least some of the affiliated users in a cache memory, and using the cache memory to determine whether items accessed by the first user are on electronic wish lists of the affiliated users.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

Dependent Claim 14

Claim 14 depends from Claim 12, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 12. In addition, the rejection of Claim 14 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 14, namely “updating the data to add a second user to the set of affiliated users in response to one of the following: (a) the first user purchasing an item from an electronic wish list of the second user; (b) the first user purchasing a gift for the second user; or (c) the first user sending an electronic card to the second user.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

Dependent Claim 15

Claim 15 depends from Claim 12, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 12. In addition, the rejection of Claim 15 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 15,

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namely “providing an option for the first user to explicitly designate said affiliated users.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

Dependent Claim 16

Claim 16 depends from Claim 12, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 12. In addition, the rejection of Claim 16 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 16, namely “wherein notifying the first user comprises displaying a notification message on a catalog page that includes a description of the accessed item.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

Dependent Claim 17

Claim 17 depends from Claim 16, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 16. In addition, the rejection of Claim 17 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 17, namely “wherein the catalog page is a product detail page for the accessed item.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

Dependent Claim 18

Claim 18 depends from Claim 16, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 16. In addition, the rejection of Claim 18 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 18, namely “wherein the catalog page is a search results page generated in response to a query submission by the first user.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

Dependent Claim 19

Claim 19 depends from Claim 16, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 16. In addition, the rejection of Claim 19 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 19, namely “wherein the catalog page is a category page that includes a list of items falling within a particular category of the electronic catalog.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

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Dependent Claim 20

Claim 20 depends from Claim 16, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 16. In addition, the rejection of Claim 20 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 20, namely “wherein the notification message includes an explicit or implicit indication of at least one of (a) a date the accessed item was added to the wish list, and (b) a date the wish list was last updated.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

Dependent Claim 21

Claim 21 depends from Claim 16, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 16. In addition, the rejection of Claim 21 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 21, namely “wherein the notification message includes information about an upcoming gift-giving event associated with the second user.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

Dependent Claim 22

Claim 22 depends from Claim 12, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 12. In addition, the rejection of Claim 22 is improper because the Examiner has not identified a suggestion or motivation to combine the teachings of Westrope with the teachings of Knorr et al. and Wolfe. In this regard, the Examiner’s argument that such a combination would be obvious “because it would provide a catalog process and system which provides efficient product and service selectivity to prospective customers and which selectively generates market provider data of user/customer” is not supported by the references, as the references do not provide a suggestion or motivation to make such a combination.

Dependent Claim 23

Claim 23 depends from Claim 12, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 12. In addition, the rejection of Claim 23 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 23, namely “determining whether, and notifying the first user when, an accessed item is similar to an

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item on a wish list of an affiliated user.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

Independent Claim 24

The rejection of independent Claim 24 is improper because, among other reasons, the applied references do not disclose or suggest the following limitations: “in response to a second user purchasing an item from the electronic wish list of the first user, updating a data repository to indicate that the first user is affiliated with the second user.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

The rejection of independent Claim 24 is also improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest “subsequently to updating the data repository, monitoring browsing of the electronic catalog by the second user and, during said browsing of the electronic catalog, notifying the second user when an item accessed by the second user is on the electronic wish list of the first user.” The wish list generation and access process described at paragraph 53 of Wolfe does not satisfy these limitations.

The rejection of independent Claim 24 is also improper because, as discussed above in connection with Claim 1, the Examiner has not identified a suggestion or motivation to combine Wolfe and Knorr et al.

Dependent Claim 25

Claim 25 depends from Claim 24, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 24. In addition, the rejection of Claim 25 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 25, namely “wherein notifying the second user comprises supplementing a page of the catalog with a message indicating that an item displayed therein is on the wish list of the first user, said message provided as a result of said updating of the data repository.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

Dependent Claim 26

Claim 26 depends from Claim 25, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 25. In addition, the rejection of Claim 26 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest that the recited page is “a product detail page for the item.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

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Dependent Claim 27

Claim 27 depends from Claim 25, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 25. In addition, the rejection of Claim 27 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest that the recited page is “a search results page generated in response to a query submitted by the second user.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

Dependent Claim 28

Claim 28 depends from Claim 25, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 25. In addition, the rejection of Claim 28 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest that the recited page is “a category page that includes a list of items falling within a particular category of the electronic catalog.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

Dependent Claim 29

Claim 29 depends from Claim 25, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 25. In addition, the rejection of Claim 29 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 29, namely “wherein the message indicates at least one of (a) a date the item was added to the wish list, and (b) a date the wish list was last updated.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

Dependent Claim 30

Claim 30 depends from Claim 25, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 25. In addition, the rejection of Claim 30 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 30, namely “wherein the message includes information about an upcoming gift-giving event associated with the first user.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

Dependent Claim 31

Claim 31 depends from Claim 24, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 24. In addition, the rejection of Claim 31 is improper because, as set forth above in connection with Claim 22, the Examiner has not identified a

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suggestion or motivation to combine the teachings of Westrope with the teachings of Knorr et al. and Wolfe.

Dependent Claim 32

Claim 32 depends from Claim 24, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 24. In addition, the rejection of Claim 32 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 32, namely “determining whether, and notifying the second user when, an accessed item is similar to an item on a wish list of the first user.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

Independent Claim 33

The rejection of independent Claim 33 is improper because, among other reasons, the applied references do not disclose or suggest the following in the context of the other limitations of the claim: “when the first user accesses a first item in the electronic catalog, determining whether, and notifying the first user if, the first item is similar to an item on an electronic wish list of an affiliated user, as reflected by the similarity data.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

The rejection of independent Claim 33 is also improper because, as discussed above in connection with Claim 1, the Examiner has not identified a suggestion or motivation to combine Knorr et al. and Wolfe.

Dependent Claim 34

Claim 34 depends from Claim 33, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 33. In addition, the rejection of Claim 34 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 34, namely “further comprising generating the similarity data at least by analyzing user browsing histories to identify items that are accessed in combination relatively frequently.” The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

Dependent Claim 35

Claim 35 depends from Claim 33, and is therefore allowable over the applied references for the reasons set forth above for Claim 33. In addition, the rejection of Claim 35 is improper because the applied references do not disclose or suggest the limitations added by Claim 35,

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namely "further comprising updating the affiliation data, in response to the first user purchasing an item from an electronic wish list of a second user, to add the second user to the set of affiliated users." The current Office Action does not fully address these limitations.

VIII. CONCLUSION

For the reasons set forth above, the rejections of Claims 1-35 are improper and should be reversed.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: 9-28-05

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CLAIMS APPENDIX

1. An electronic catalog system, comprising:
 - an electronic catalog of items that are available for purchase, the electronic catalog including pages that include descriptions of the items, and providing functionality for online users to select items to purchase;
 - a wish list application that provides functionality for users of the electronic catalog to create wish lists with items selected from the electronic catalog, and to purchase items as gifts from the wish lists of other users;
 - a database which stores information about affiliations between the users; and
 - a notification component which is responsive, to an online request from a first user for a catalog page which includes a description of a first item, by at least (a) determining whether the first item is on an electronic wish list of a user who is affiliated with the first user, and (b) when the first item is determined to be on an electronic wish list of a second user who is affiliated with the first user, supplementing the page with a notification that the first item is on the wish list of the second user;whereby users are notified, during browsing of the electronic catalog, when accessed items are on the electronic wish lists of other users.
2. The system of Claim 1, further comprising a cache memory which stores wish lists of users affiliated with the first user while the first user browses the electronic catalog, wherein the notification component accesses the cache memory to determine whether items viewed by the first user are on the wish lists of users affiliated with the first user.
3. The system of Claim 1, further comprising a component that updates the database to indicate an affiliation between two users as a result of one user purchasing a gift for the other user.
4. The system of Claim 1, further comprising a component that updates the database to indicate an affiliation between two users as a result of one user sending an electronic card to the other user.
5. The system of Claim 1, further comprising a form page from which users may explicitly create affiliations with other users.

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6. The system of Claim 1, wherein the notification component is further responsive to the online request by notifying the first user if the first item is similar to an item on a wish list of an affiliated user.

7. The system of Claim 1, wherein the notification component provides, within the notification, a selectable link to the wish list of the second user.

8. The system of Claim 1, wherein the notification component indicates, within the notification, at least one of (a) a date the first item was added to the wish list, and (b) a date the wish list was last updated.

9. The system of Claim 1, wherein the notification component provides, within the notification, information about an upcoming gift-giving event associated with the second user.

10. The system of Claim 1, wherein the catalog page is a product detail page.

11. The system of Claim 1, wherein the catalog page includes a list of items.

12. A method of assisting users in selecting items to purchase from an electronic catalog of items, the method comprising:

maintaining electronic wish lists for each of a plurality of users;

for at least a first user, maintaining data indicating a set of other users that are affiliated with the first user ("affiliated users");

monitoring browsing of the electronic catalog by the first user to determine whether items accessed by the first user are on electronic wish lists of the affiliated users; and

notifying the first user during said browsing of the electronic catalog when an accessed item is determined to be on an electronic wish list of an affiliated user.

13. The method of Claim 12, wherein monitoring browsing of the electronic catalog by the first user comprises maintaining wish lists of at least some of the affiliated users in a cache memory, and using the cache memory to determine whether items accessed by the first user are on electronic wish lists of the affiliated users.

14. The method of Claim 12, further comprising updating the data to add a second user to the set of affiliated users in response to one of the following: (a) the first user purchasing an item from an electronic wish list of the second user; (b) the first user purchasing a gift for the second user; or (c) the first user sending an electronic card to the second user.

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15. The method of Claim 12, further comprising providing an option for the first user to explicitly designate said affiliated users.

16. The method of Claim 12, wherein notifying the first user comprises displaying a notification message on a catalog page that includes a description of the accessed item.

17. The method of Claim 16, wherein the catalog page is a product detail page for the accessed item.

18. The method of Claim 16, wherein the catalog page is a search results page generated in response to a query submission by the first user.

19. The method of Claim 16, wherein the catalog page is a category page that includes a list of items falling within a particular category of the electronic catalog.

20. The method of Claim 16, wherein the notification message includes an explicit or implicit indication of at least one of (a) a date the accessed item was added to the wish list, and (b) a date the wish list was last updated.

21. The method of Claim 16, wherein the notification message includes information about an upcoming gift-giving event associated with the second user.

22. The method of Claim 12, wherein notifying the first user comprises outputting an audible message.

23. The method of Claim 12, further comprising determining whether, and notifying the first user when, an accessed item is similar to an item on a wish list of an affiliated user.

24. A method of assisting users in selecting items to purchase from an electronic catalog of items, the method comprising:

maintaining an electronic wish list of a first user, the electronic wish list including items selected from the electronic catalog by the first user and being accessible to other users;

in response to a second user purchasing an item from the electronic wish list of the first user, updating a data repository to indicate that the first user is affiliated with the second user; and

subsequently to updating the data repository, monitoring browsing of the electronic catalog by the second user and, during said browsing of the electronic catalog,

notifying the second user when an item accessed by the second user is on the electronic wish list of the first user.

25. The method of Claim 24, wherein notifying the second user comprises supplementing a page of the catalog with a message indicating that an item displayed therein is on the wish list of the first user, said message provided as a result of said updating of the data repository.

26. The method of Claim 25, wherein the page is a product detail page for the item.

27. The method of Claim 25, wherein the page is a search results page generated in response to a query submitted by the second user.

28. The method of Claim 25, wherein the page is a category page that includes a list of items falling within a particular category of the electronic catalog.

29. The method of Claim 25, wherein the message indicates at least one of (a) a date the item was added to the wish list, and (b) a date the wish list was last updated.

30. The method of Claim 25, wherein the message includes information about an upcoming gift-giving event associated with the first user.

31. The method of Claim 24, wherein notifying the second user comprises outputting an audible message.

32. The method of Claim 24, further comprising determining whether, and notifying the second user when, an accessed item is similar to an item on a wish list of the first user.

33. A method of assisting users in selecting items to purchase from an electronic catalog of items, the method comprising:

maintaining electronic wish lists for each of a plurality of users;

for at least a first user, maintaining affiliation data indicating a set of other users that are affiliated with the first user ("affiliated users");

maintaining similarity data which indicates similarities between items in the catalog; and

when the first user accesses a first item in the electronic catalog, determining whether, and notifying the first user if, the first item is similar to an item on an electronic wish list of an affiliated user, as reflected by the similarity data.

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34. The method of Claim 33, further comprising generating the similarity data at least by analyzing user browsing histories to identify items that are accessed in combination relatively frequently.

35. The method of Claim 33, further comprising updating the affiliation data, in response to the first user purchasing an item from an electronic wish list of a second user, to add the second user to the set of affiliated users.

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EVIDENCE APPENDIX

None

RELATED PROCEEDINGS APPENDIX

None